



# LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

1930 Ninth Avenue  
Helena, MT 59601  
PH: 406.4HEALTH or 406.443.2584  
Fax: 406.457.8990

**For immediate release**

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**Contact: Mandi Zanto, WIC Director, 406-457-8912**

**Gayle Shirley, Communications Coordinator, 406-457-8908**

## **Aug. 4 Event to Celebrate Benefits of Breastfeeding**

The public is invited to observe World Breastfeeding Day Saturday, Aug. 4, at a fun-filled family event that will celebrate the many benefits of breastfeeding.

The event will be from 10 a.m. to noon in Women's Park, at the corner of Neill and Fuller avenues. It's sponsored by the WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) nutrition program of the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department and the Helena Breastfeeding Coalition, which includes representatives of St. Peter's Hospital and the La Leche League.

The event will include activities for the entire family, including music, food, balloon animals, face and fingernail painting, mini-massages, and a "bounce house." Nursing mothers also will be invited to participate in "The Big Latch," an effort to set a world record for the number of women nursing their babies at exactly the same time all around the world. The aim of The Big Latch is to raise awareness of breastfeeding and make it a normal part of day-to-day life in the community. The Big Latch will take place at 10:30 a.m.

WIC has long promoted breastfeeding because it has been linked to numerous health benefits for babies and mothers. The program encourages women to breastfeed their infants for a year or longer.

Infants who are breastfed have fewer ear and respiratory infections and gastrointestinal illnesses, according to the federal Office on Women's Health. Breastfeeding also has been shown to lower the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Children who were breastfed may have a lower risk for developing asthma, obesity, and diabetes.

In mothers, breastfeeding has been linked to a lower risk of type 2 diabetes, breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and postpartum depression.

Society also benefits when women choose to breastfeed. Recent research shows that if 90 percent of U.S. families breastfed exclusively for six months, almost 1,000 infant deaths could be prevented each year and close to \$13 billion in medical costs could be saved. Breastfed infants typically need fewer doctor visits, prescriptions, and hospitalizations.

Breastfeeding also benefits the environment, since it doesn't produce trash in the form of formula cans and bottle supplies.

About 85 percent of mothers in Lewis and Clark County are breastfeeding at the time they're discharged from the hospital after giving birth, according to statistics compiled by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services.

More information is available from WIC, 457-8912, and the Helena Breastfeeding Coalition website, <http://helenabreastfeedingcoalition.webs.com/>

*The Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department's mission is to improve and protect the health of all Lewis & Clark County residents.*

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